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## AN EXPERIMENTAL SUMMER

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A year ago a theory of vacation for upper elementary and high-school pupils was published in this magazine, followed by a plan to be tried in the summer of 1905 at Wheeling, Ill. This plan was in operation from June 20 to September 30, with twenty boys and girls who remained for periods varying from one week to fourteen weeks each. Judged by the satisfaction of the boys and girls while they were there, their unwillingness to leave, and their desire to return next summer, the experiment must be called successful. The judgment of the grown people who carried it on affords material for this article.

The theory, in general, was in harmony with the theory of the University Elementary School as to the place of industry in elementary education, and called for the revival of pioneer conditions as a means of development in the child of individual efficiency for community ends. The conditions which confronted the two families of settlers on Prairie View Farm in April were as primitive as could well be found near so modern a city as Chicago. Wheeling is only twenty-one miles distant as the crow flies, but in habits and ideas the country surrounding it is nearer to some parts of Germany. This, however, had little influence on the new settlers, except that it forced them to depend more upon themselves. There was no forest to fell, but there was a wilderness to be cleared, land to be brought into tillable condition, and a home to be created. The ground was full of thistles, there were no fences, and for a short time the children were sent out to herd the domestic animals.

Much arduous labor was done in the spring quarter by all the persons concerned in the scheme, and the children showed an excellent understanding of the plan and the greatest willingness to co-operate in whatever was to be done.

June 20 found at the farm a number of boys and girls from good families, with the most conscientious home-training, who had had the best educational advantages. Half of the total number present during the summer had had the advantages of foreign travel. The children were first put to work at painting an old house on the farm, which, it was hoped, would develop into a country club-house, and in fixing up the yard about this house. Both of these employments were quite popular, but there was no expert in either line to direct their efforts, and the results were not all that could be desired. The need of a landscape gardener was especially felt. Hoeing corn and plowing corn were excellent occupations for small and large boys respectively. Cherries were soon to be gathered, and the haying season came on, while chickens, cattle, and pigs were always to be cared for. Occupations involving the use of farm machinery, the driving of horses, and the care of all the animals were the "jobs" most sought after. Cutting thistles was another necessary occupation—not a popular one. Hot weather brought harvesting and threshing, in which the large boys arose to the occasion, the smaller ones ran errands, and the medium-sized ones tended more to reading or to play. Two hours of manual labor per day was insisted upon as a minimum, but the natural tendency to relax during July and August was taken to indicate a physical and mental need of rest at that time.

A sincere effort was made to carry out a literary program in the afternoons, and instruction in biology, geology, and botany was provided at the end of each week; but the scientific excursions which had been considered delightful during the school year were irksome in the summer, and avoided whenever possible. Instruction in agriculture was welcomed at table or in the field, but avoided if it came in any form that suggested a class.

An abundance of reading matter was provided, and those who were readers availed themselves of their opportunities, while those who were not literary in their tastes did more work. The reading aloud of *Innocents Abroad* was tolerated, the reading

of Scott met with no success at all, and the only thing called for was Sherlock Holmes's latest exploits. Great interest was taken in dramatic efforts, and this fact, together with the class of reading preferred, is very suggestive as to the lines along which progress may be made another summer.

From the grown-up point of view, the greatest lack was in organization and expert assistance; from the point of view of the children, this seems to have been the greatest attraction. Regular hours for rising and retiring, and for meals, were insisted upon and quite successfully maintained—they breakfasted at 6:30 A. M., dined at 12 M., had supper at 6 P. M. and retired at 8:30 P. M.—but the proper care of person and rooms (they were expected to care for their own rooms), and proper behavior at the table, were only approximated, and that with the greatest wear and tear on the nerves of all the grown people in charge. The children delighted in the possibility of wearing overalls all day, of renewing primitive man's friendship with the animals, of living out of doors nearly all the time, and of being abundantly fed by a motherly darkey whom they christened "Ma."

The most successful feature of the organization was undoubtedly the fact that the children were paid by the hour for their work, if it were satisfactorily done. To add to the incentive to work, some parents doubled or even trebled the amounts which their children earned. The absence of temptations to spend money kept the earnings almost clear, and the children learned its value in terms of labor.

The farm life proved just as attractive to girls as to boys, although their smaller physical strength and greater nervousness made it difficult to find suitable things for them to do out of doors. The addition to the force of a competent gardener, a music teacher, and possibly a teacher of domestic science will make it possible to have more girls next summer.

The farm is not endowed, and few educational institutions expect to be self-supporting. Certainly no great amount of expansion is possible without an endowment. If it were possible to command the services of just the right persons trained in

agricultural colleges, an ideal vacation place might be made out of Prairie View Farm. Most of the features so attractive to children may be retained, and others of genuine value may be added, if another summer is more successful financially.

The outcome of the experiment, then, has been that a score of boys and girls—sixteen boys and four girls—have found a healthful and pleasant place to spend their vacation. Whether any more than this is ever made of it depends upon how much Chicago parents wish their children to have of this kind of education—how much they feel the vacation problem and wish to see it worked out. Parents must make a great sacrifice of comfort if they wish to lead the simple life in the country with their children, and most of them would like to delegate it to someone else. The experiment will be tried another summer under as favorable circumstances and with as much assistance as can be commanded. The directors of the school will spend most of the spring quarter in visiting other places where the industrial features have been worked out. The Hillside School in Wisconsin combines country life with preparation for college the year around, while the Tuskegee Institution and the best agricultural colleges will give much to one who observes them with a definite purpose in mind. If it is possible to make distinct progress educationally as well as to get reasonable financial compensation for the time and labor expended, it may develop further in future summers. In the beginning the directors hoped that the plan would develop into a permanent institution open all the year. They believed, and still believe, that there is room in the educational world for another kind of school in the country and that the crowded conditions of Chicago schools demand some such outlet. They would be glad to hear from any parents and teachers who are interested in making a plan by which the education of boys and girls can be conducted partly in the city and partly in the country. Applications for the coming summer should be in as soon as possible.